

BLOOMFIELD CITIZEN.

FOR THE BLOOMFIELD CITIZEN.

A SUNDAY SOMEWHERE ELSE.

It was Sunday morning, and hot. Just the kind of weather when all the papers are filled with jokes about the aspiring thermometer and the prevailing tendency on the part of hens to lay hard-boiled eggs.

Grace was hot; Grace was desperate; I was both.

Never had my soul so rebelled at the prospect of hearing "a supply," and, reviving my spiritual opportunities in my mind, I decided not to go to church.

But at this decision my troublesome conscience awoke, and reminded me that both Grace and I were daughters of men who were "Pillars of the Church," and women who were "Mothers in Israel."

I must go to church somewhere.

"Grace," said I.

Grace was electrified by the animation of my tone, and filled with admiration for my energy.

"It's ninety-two in the shade, and still you can speak forcibly. Well?"

"Do you remember, Grace, I asked, 'that queer little church we saw yesterday when we drove through Riverdale?'"

"Yes," said my friend inquiringly.

"I can't reconcile flesh or spirit to the ministrations of the supply," I went on, "so let's go to Riverdale. How's the horse?"

"Oh, Baby's all right," said Grace, with a commendable attempt to appear interested; "someone told Papa yesterday that if he wasn't careful that little bay horse of his would drop dead in the street. That's all that ails Baby."

This was a comparatively slight drawback, as Baby had been going to drop dead ever since I could remember.

"Where's Jonas?" I next inquired.

"Praying in the barn."

"A laudable occupation! Do you suppose we could induce him to defer his devotions long enough to harness Baby to the new buggy?"

"I shouldn't wonder," and Grace laughed.

Having given orders for Baby to be brought around, we went to get our hats, and in a few moments were driving along the unshaded, dusty road to Riverdale. How hot it was. The air fairly shimmered in the breathless Sunday quiet.

"Have you any collection?" I asked, more to make conversation than because I was at all curious.

"One five cent piece."

I looked at the owner of this wealth admiringly. I had three copper pennies, and a calling card. Grace's next remark was cutting.

"How grateful the people will feel to the aristocratic visitors who brought eight cents."

After that there was nothing more for me to say, until a turn of the road brought us in sight of an old brown church, and we had driven under the long low shed which already sheltered several horses. Then I ventured to remark that Sunday-school seemed to be still in session, and proposed that we should seek further information from an old man who appeared to be asleep beneath a tree. He was a very old man with heavy white hair, carefully brushed from the middle of his head to form a halo around his ears. He had abolished the collar, and had descended to unostentatious simplicity.

"Probably one of Riverdale's Upper Ten," was Grace's comment.

I approached in my most winning manner.

"Sir," said I.

"Ma'am," said he, meditatively munching a long grass stem.

"When does church begin?"

"Quarter to eleven."

"When does Sunday school close?"

"Quarter to eleven."

"What time is it now?"

"Quarter to eleven."

"Thanks," said I.

Grace and I retreated behind the church, and after a little I discovered a graveyard not far away.

"I'm going in," said I.

"I'm not," said Grace.

Undoubtedly by this time the "courtroom reader" has found that Grace and I are not given to wasting words so without further parley I walked to the low, bending iron fence which surrounded the neglected little cemetery, and read the name and inscription upon the dejected brown headstone which reclined against the bars.

"Getty, beloved wife of Abraham, departed this life, April 7, 1821."

Oh, do not mourn me, husband dear. I am not dead, but sleeping here. Soon my my ransomed soul shall see. Prepare yourself follow me."

I walked back to Grace and repeated this to her but Grace said I was "frivolous," and told me to go back if I chose. For her part she disliked to ramble in church-yards, they made her "creepy." I obeyed. Grace is older than I.

I pulled open the rickety gate, and entered the grass-grown place, followed by the observant eyes of the gray-haired member of Riverdale's Upper Ten. It was a pretty little graveyard, although the brambles ran wild in the weedy paths, and the vines rioted over the old, forgotten, forsaken monuments.

Soft, feathery grasses, red clover, and the starchy daisies grew lovingly over the dead below. The great Mother of us all had not forgotten her long-buried children, and had scattered her treasures lavishly on their quiet resting-places. I pushed through the brambles, stopping now and then to spell out the words on the moss-covered stones. Almost all the dates were early in 1800. On one of the oldest I managed to decipher these words.

"In memory of ———— 92 yrs. Our friends who re do our tombs and mourn And weep our early fall. Must be lamented in their turn And share the fate of all."

It seemed strange that a ripe old age of ninety-two should be spoken of as an "early fall," and as I noticed

the grammar, I recalled that line of Gray's "Elegy," which speaks of "Their grave, their years, spent by the silent, hushed, and dim."

Far off in a corner, under a wild rose bush which was pink with a luxuriance of frail blossoms, I found one grave, covered with tall grasses, and whose simple stone bore only "Anna, aged seventeen," and the date, 1813. Very brief, but how much left to be said!

And I found myself wondering about this long-lost Anna, who, had she lived would have been old enough to have been my great grandmother. Was she pretty? I could almost see her sweet, serious face, as, in her quaint old-fashioned gown and bonnet, she came on Sunday to this very old church. For I knew she did go to church, this "Anna, aged seventeen," I could see the desolate home when she died. And I could see the gentle mother as she stood by the grave so carefully tended then, so forgotten now. I could see the awe on the faces of the children as they brought fresh flowers for "sister's grave." I could see the young lover as he knelt in despair beside the stone, and I could see his face, as he went away in the starlit night, brave and resolute, determined to be a better man for the sake of the bright life that was gone out.

And I broke a great branch of wild roses, and laid them gently above "Anna, aged seventeen," for the sake of her youth, and her untold story and her forgotten love.

Not far away was another stone which drew me to it, and on which I read:

"He lived to die that he might die to live."

All of life can teach no higher rule of living, and death has nothing deeper to reveal. It was the history of an heroic, albeit an unknown, life.

I went back to Grace, who was waiting patiently behind the church. If there is one thing more than another that I admire about Grace, it is her patience. It is that patience which has been declared to amount to genius.

We walked together to the door, where the distinguished gentleman before mentioned in this account was awaiting our approach.

Beckoning me aside, he remarked, with an air of mystery, "You can go in and set now." So we went in and stood a few minutes in the vestibule, waiting for Sunday-school to be dismissed. Our entry in no wise disconcerted the good people standing there. The conversation went on as before.

"And I sent you over a note in the bottom of the pail, and I says to Tommy, says I, 'Now, Tommy, don't ye dars't to lose this note,' says I, for I was settin' to have you folks come over to see Aunt Jane. She come a Monday, and says she to me, says she, 'I'm down glad to get here,' says she, and take a spell o' rest, for I feel so draggery out with all the work," says she, and I do say I'm real sorry that imp of a Tommy lost the note, but as I was a sayin' to Jane, says I, —"

But what was which Jane heard, we never knew, because the silver-haired autocrat made a sign to Grace, and we entered the church, where he showed us to a seat.

"Setting," as we had been invited to, and were glad to rest, and look around. After all, there was little to see, and we had come to worship. Four white walls, and a white ceiling, six huge, white-shuttered windows, stiff uncomely promising pews, and the pulpit, standing out in austere unloveliness, against a back ground composed of light blue kalsomine, and a hair cloth sofa. This was all. The utter lack of beauty appalled me. The Episcopalians understand this "art of beauty" better than we of sterner denominations; their poorest chapels boast some little sign of loveliness around their altars, which makes their places of worship a rest to the eyes as well as to the mind of the tired worshipper.

But the decoration which the church lacked was made up in the attitude of the congregation. No girl so poor but she boasted at least one, and often two gold bracelets. Grace looked at her unadorned arms and seemed to fear she would lose caste.

The audience slowly assembled—good, strong-faced farmers, and their stout wives, shining-checked children, all freshly scrubbed for Sunday, young men in "store-clothes," and girls in dresses carefully copied after "La Mode de Paris." Country life—plenty of it; country simplicity—not a whit. Simplicity seems to be a thing absorbed by this rising generation, and as I looked at the fresh girl face in front of me, so out of keeping with the cheap and tawdry bonnet, I thought of the grave under the wild-rose tree and of "Anna, aged seventeen."

"Eye and bye a patient woman little minister arose, and prayed wearily, but with great earnestness, for the divine blessing on the flock under his keeping. He loved them, and they were not half worthy of the good man. These two facts were at once apparent. Then they sang. The melody was in pressing need of repairs, but it did its part bravely, and the member of the Upper Ten upheld the singing with, perhaps, more zeal than knowledge. Grace began a clear, pure alto, but ceased on becoming the "observed of all observers." That's another remark I like Grace. She never courts public attention.

Then the sermon began. The speaker began by saying that for four consecutive Sundays he had preached on the text, "Thou shalt not steal;" and now on this, "the fifth consecutive Sunday," he would again take for his theme, "Thou shalt not steal." This had a visibly depressing effect on the audience.

Grace felt for her purse, thinking, perhaps, that it would be well to take precautions, if this were one of Riverdale's besetting sins.

We settled ourselves to listen, and began to regulate the usual "fanning accompaniment."

An unmistakable peal of thunder

rumbled us and caused a slight disturbance in the audience. The sky had grown threateningly dark. A man leaped back, and beckoned to a young man behind her.

"Tom," said she, in what the novels call a "sepulchral whisper," "go and see if the horse is wet."

(I immediately began to wonder if this were the "Tom" of whose misdeeds I had already had a description.)

"He ain't wet, mother," expostulated Tom, "taint rained any yet."

"Go right off," was the mother's sole response, and Tom went. In a moment he returned, and whispered "I told you he wasn't wet; taint rained."

The anxious woman seemed reassured at this, although I could have told her that Tom had never left the building. But Grace and I were uncomfortable. What if it should rain on the buggy, and the very best robe? Dreadful thought! Should such an event take place, how many more prayers Jonas would have to say to keep from having wicked thoughts about our carelessness.

Grace leaned over and asked if I would like to go; a good many seemed to be doing so, and the pastor did not seem to be disturbed. So we made our exit as quietly as possible, passing the old man who had taken such a friendly interest in us, and who was slumbering peacefully on a back bench, oblivious to everything but his own sweet dreams.

We hurriedly untied the horse, and drove as rapidly as possible, hoping to reach home before the storm broke, and so escape criticism.

But about a rod from the church a great wind sprang up, and clouds of dust blinded both ourselves and poor Baby. Soon heavy drops of rain began to fall, and Grace, in despair, turned the carriage into a neighboring farm-yard. A man in a wide straw hat, duck trousers, and shirt sleeves, was walking toward the barn as quietly as if two young women, calling frantically, were an every-day occurrence. We finally succeeded in attracting his attention and in inducing him to take care of Baby, and to give us shelter in the house. He said "Mother" was the one we wanted. So we rushed in search of "Mother," whom we found on the porch in stocking feet, Mother Hubbard wrapper, and calico apron. And just here, when Grace read this over, she said I always paid a great deal too much attention to clothes.

"I will just sit here, thank you," said I, when we had entered the clean, country kitchen, and I appropriated the kitchen rocker. But "Mother" was not of the same mind.

"No, you just won't," said she, "I ain't agoin' to have you under my feet. You can go into the parlor."

I would not convey the impression that "Mother" was inhospitable. Not at all. She made her curt speech in a sweet voice, and accompanied it with a kind smile. So through dark passages she led the way to the parlor, and threw open the blinds, disclosing what we all have seen in our grandmothers' homes, the slippery hair-cloth furniture, the marble-topped table, the picture of our country's Father, and the well-preserved wax fruit. Hospitable "Mother" and Father as well, came in to entertain us.

"There hasn't been such a storm," ventured Father, "since Lucinda died, high sixteen years ago."

"Twenty," corrected Mother, "twenty come Christ mas."

"I'll forget how old I am if Mother didn't keep remindin' me," he said. In the course of the conversation it came out that Mother had had Grace's father for her physician, and that she had known my father when he was only a small boy; and, as we talked, I felt as if I had known kind-hearted, sweet-voiced Mother all my days. By this time the rain had ceased, and declining the kind invitation to "stay and have some green corn," we decided to hurry home. Father brought the horse to the gate, and we drove away. Baby took the journey easily, and showed no symptoms of dropping dead, to our great relief.

Grace and I did not talk much. I believe I said words that Grace and I do not waste before, but we enjoyed the wet roads, the dripping trees, the sweet country lanes, and all the rain had brought out. There was a Sunday stillness over everything, and my mind went back to our morning, and the not one, but many sermons I had listened to—"Anna, aged seventeen," the influence of the quiet churchyard and the kind-heartedness of Father, and Mother.

As we neared home, Grace remarked "We forgot that eight cents."

"Sure enough," said I.

THE SCHOOL QUESTION.

To the Bloomfield Citizen:

In his second letter to the Public School question, Rev. J. M. Nardello labors to prove by statistics and otherwise, that education produces crime, or, as he adroitly puts it, "crime has increased with education," and would have us believe that this is the result of a system of education which does not include religious instruction. The comparison that he makes is as unfair as the inference he draws is incorrect. The New England States of Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode Island, are largely manufacturing and draw a population from home and abroad, to the cities and towns, where their surroundings, associations, homes, as well as the character of their work tend to produce conditions favorable to crime, to an extent to which agricultural communities, such as were found in Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina, at the time when the statistics were taken, were strangers to. A large proportion of the worst of the emigrants flock to these eastern cities, and from these and their native born children come the bulk of the criminals. Take any of our large cities and scan the names of the officials in their gov-

ernment and see how uniformly foreign names predominate. When, as in New York and Chicago, lately, some scandal or rascality is uncovered, note the nationality of the culprits and remember that these men occupy their positions only because they are able to dictate nominations by reason of the presence of a multitude of their countrymen. The fact is, that in spite of a splendid and constantly improving system of education, the weight of foreign vice and ignorance is too great to enable it to be counteracted to the full extent, the demoralization which the latter produces in manufacturing centers. The remedy seems to be rather in an enforcement of the laws compelling education, than in a change of system. No objection is made when Catholic parents prefer to send their children to their own schools, though these are good reasons why they might properly be. The Public Schools are among the safe-guarders of the Republic, and we might insist upon supervising the education of those who are to become citizens, and to have a voice in determining the future of the government. The teachers furnished by the Catholic Church are chiefly foreigners unfamiliar with our traditions and history, and are both in respect to the ideas inimical to the institutions of the United States, and, in fact, it is because of this hostility that they demand separate education for their children. The plea that it is because the education is not religious is specious, the real reason being because it is not sectarian.

The assumption that Catholic children are so much purer and better than the average, and that a contact in the Public Schools, with other children "would expose them to danger in faith and morals," is absurd. If the teaching in Parochial Schools produces such a type of Christianity as he describes with "not a whitewashed religion with its pharisaical and sanctimonious appearances, but a sufficient knowledge of the creed they profess, with a solid, pure and real piety" then, indeed, we can have no objection to them, and well would it be if the Public Schools were abandoned and Parochial Schools substituted. In all that Father Nardello says in condemnation of a religious instruction that is confined to one hour or more a week in a Sunday-school, we are in hearty sympathy, but do not admit that religious education is thus limited or that it necessarily follows that it must be removed from the home to the church, and believe that if the home is not the centre of religious influence and training, it will be failure. In the Public School system of to-day the best thought of the most advanced thinkers is interested. The course of studies is carefully planned, the books are thoroughly scrutinized, the character and attainments of the teachers kept at a high standard, and the oversight is most thorough and watchful, and the cost of education is reduced to a minimum so as to afford no excuse for any parents in bringing their children up in ignorance. Were this system abolished and the Parochial system universally established, the result would be clearly disastrous and tend to ignorance and vice. Father Nardello would limit public education "to cases where parents have not sufficient means to give their children a good, elementary education, then let the State aid them, just as it should aid them, when necessary, with means to feed and clothe their children." In other words, the State should establish pauper schools as it does almshouses. The day when such a plan will be adopted, will never come in America.

The pessimistic view which produces the thought that the increase of crime among the intellectual and educated classes who use the advantages of school learning, the better to defraud creditors, embezzle trust funds, rob banks, swindle the weak and ignorant, form conspiracies to cheat the government, and to bribe or sell official honor for personal gain, and "that, solid, pure and real piety in the young people of our day . . . is only a rarity," is unworthy of a man who is doing all that he can in the use of his best judgment to combat these admitted evils, and who has only to open his eyes to see the wonderful advance which this generation has made in all philanthropic and benevolent enterprises; to note the churches, colleges, hospitals and asylums that are rising on every hand, through the toils and self-sacrifice of rich and poor; to see the wonderful impetus the missionary spirit has received, and the abundant sympathy and assistance that is poured out for suffering everywhere! the hosts of young men who are being educated for preaching the gospel, and the young women that are studying medicine that they may practice in far off India and elsewhere, because the customs and prejudices there close the door to men's efforts to relieve suffering humanity; and the herculean effort that is being made to educate the black race, with kindred efforts every hand, only less conspicuous, which demand constant faith, toil and sacrifice. It is believed that many of these results are directly traceable to the present system of education.

The Bible, in every land and tongue, and devoted men to teach its truths, and its perusal, is certainly a tribute to the value of an educational system broad enough to include within it, the children of every land, color and clime. It is not possible to devise any system for the general good in which all will unite, but Public Schools have commended themselves to such an extent, as that they are almost universally used and will not be abandoned. Therefore, every patriot should aid in strengthening and developing them.

E. A. S.

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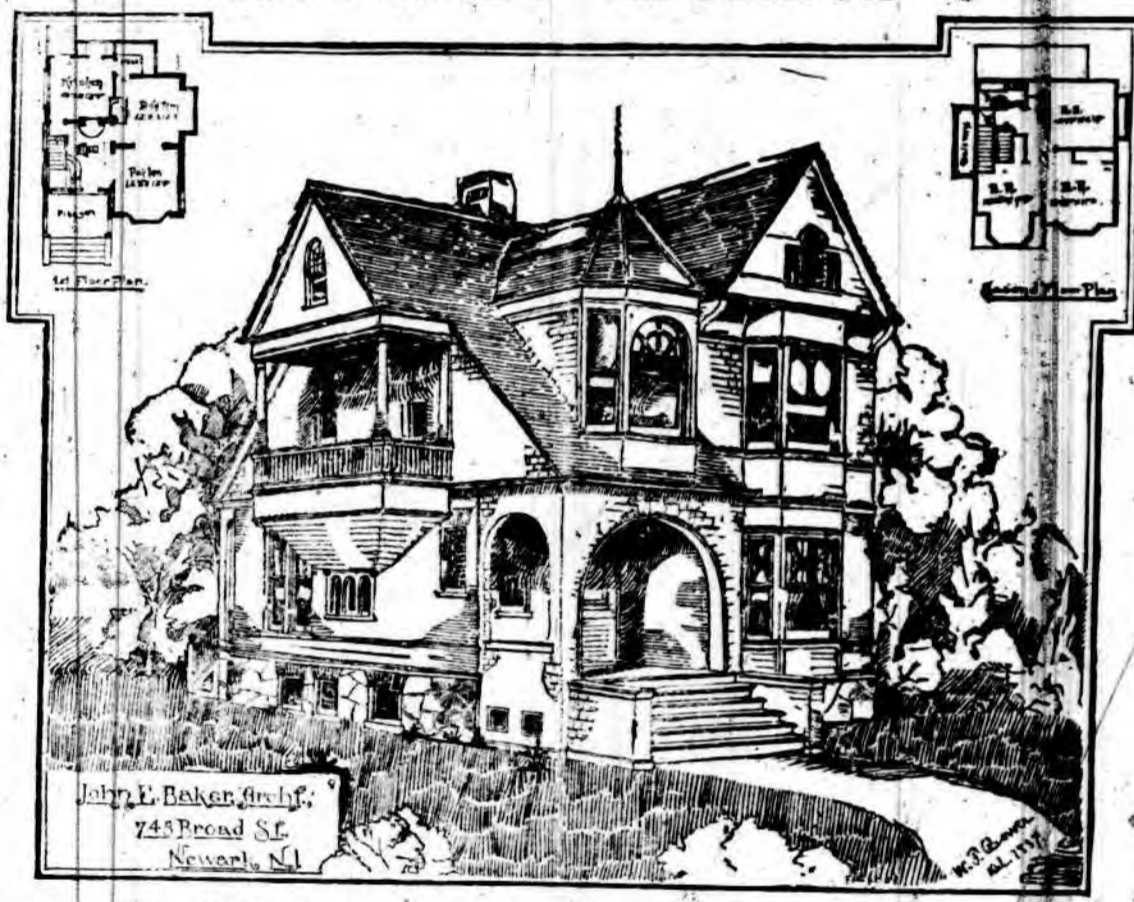
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Arrive Newark 5:00 P.M.

Leave Newark 7:15 P.M.

Arrive Philadelphia 9:15 P.M.

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